

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Alexander Melville Bell and Eliza Symonds Bell, September 5, 1879

Letter written by Alexander Graham Bell to his Parents. Cambridge, Mass., September 5th, 1879. Dear Papa and Mama:

(I) You have overlooked the contents of a letter written to you a few days after Papa's departure from Cambridge and you now blame me for not having attended to business matters — about which in reality I had written — about which I had asked your advice — and about which I was awaiting your answer.

It is true I should have written again for an explanation of your silence — but my usual dilatoriness in regard to letter writing came in the way and I was fully occupied with other matters. If you look at the letter I sent you announcing the death of Prof. Monroe — and to one portion of which you sent a telegraphic answer — you will see that I told you that I had promised Mr. Hubbard that I would do nothing in the investment of our money — without the advice and consent of some business man. He mentioned his confidence in Mr. Storrow and accordingly he is our Counsellor in such matters. I mentioned this to you and stated that in regard to the Brantford Loan Company — I found that I had not sufficient knowledge of the status of the Company nor of the way in which its business was conducted to give Mr. Storrow any groundwork upon which to build a judgement as to the value of the investment — nor did I know anything in regard to its assets and liabilities. I therefore asked you to send at once such 2 printed matter or such information as would enable a business man like Mr. Storrow to form an idea concerning the investment — and I asked you to advise me regarding the amount you would think it best for Mabel to invest in the Company. My note was written (for a wonder) immediately upon receipt of your note enclosing a notice received from the Directors — and (for a wonder) in this matter I cannot be justly charged with dilatoriness.

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I have wondered why no answers were received to my queries — but time slipped on — and I delayed writing to ascertain. I invested \$20,000 under advice from Mr. Storrow — and have kept \$13,000 uninvested until I could hear from you in regard to the Loan Company.

I trust — that upon looking at my last letter — you will find that I am not to blame — except so far as not writing again is concerned — and that you will be able to let the Directors of the Company know that no discourtesy to them has been intended — but that simply a mistake has been made — and a misunderstanding has occurred.

In regard to the money we have I shall not invest it until I hear from you in regard to the matter.

(II) The Western Union Telegraph Company — has made an agreement with our Company — whereby they withdraw all opposition to us in seven of the Southern States. The agreement is so advantageous to our Company that it has caused the price of our stock to rise immensely.

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Although I cannot consult Mr. Hubbard I have come to the conclusion it would be foolish upon our part not to sell more of our stock. I have intimated my intention to sell 100 shares. The result is a number of persons want it. I have had two offers to buy these shares at \$280 per share — but the purchasers are so eager that I ask \$300! — and intend to take what I can get above \$280. (the par value of the shares is only \$100).

My idea is to sell as much stock at these figures as will produce enough to give us enough to live upon and hold on to the rest of our stock upon the chances of the future. My idea is to sell no more stock after realizing \$100,000 in cash.

If I sell 100 shares at the price already offered \$280 — that will produce \$28,000. If I can do no better I will take that and not sell any more at present. If however I can get \$300 per

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share — I will be willing to sell 200 shares — which would realize \$60,000. This added to what we have in our own control (\$33,000) would bring our total cash capital under our own control up to \$93,000 — leaving still 600 shares of the Telephone Company — to the mercies of the future.

This would bring our total cash capital up to \$106,000 and leave us still in possession of 600 shares if the National Bell Telephone Company (in our own control) over 1000 shares of the Telephone Company Limited of London (in a Trustee's hands) — and Patents in France, Belgium, Austria (in the hands of Trustee) and Spain still to be worked.

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If — as I expect — I can succeed — during the next few days in bringing our cash capital up to one hundred thousand dollars — you may expect to see Visible Speech go ahead. It will then be my intention to live upon our money — and open a small private school for deaf children employing teachers to carry on the work, the proceeds of the school to be devoted to advancing the Cause of the general education of the deaf by means of Articulation.

(III) The Boston University has never been in full hearty sympathy with Prof. Monroe's plans — and they now dissolve the school for 2 reasons. 1st. Because it is un-endowed — and 2d. Because they cannot find an Elocutionist of sufficient standing who can teach Prof. Monroe's Theories!

The real reason is that the School of Oratory has only been kept in existence by the indomitable perseverance of Prof. Monroe himself — who had all along been obliged to bear all the pecuniary burden of the school. So long as Prof. Monroe could make it pecuniarily profitable to the University the School was allowed to be associated in name with the University — but the moment the burden of its support is to fall upon the University itself — they cut it adrift. I have no doubt that if Uncle David chose to carry on the School as Prof. Monroe did — as a private affair of his own — that arrangements could

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be made with the University to allow it to be associated with it as before — but there is no chance of the College doing anything independently.

(IV) The project of buying the Canadian Patent is now before the Executive Committee. Mr. Smith thinks it would hasten matters if you were to make inquiries as to whether the Dominion Company want to buy the Patent.

Suppose you were to let the Dominion Company know that the National Bell Telephone Company are discussing the advisability of controlling the Canadian Patent — but that — as it is not unlikely that a consolidation will be effected with the American Speaking Telephone Company — acknowledging the validity of my patents — which would undoubtedly operate prejudicially to the Dominion Company — on account of the affiliation of the Western Union and Montreal Companies — you wish to ascertain before making any proposition to the Bell Telephone Company whether the Dominion Company or Jay Gould have any desire to purchase the Patent.

If you do this — I will immediately let it be known here — that you are in negotiation with Jay Gould and the Dominion Company for the purchase of the Patent. This would hasten action on the part of the Bell Telephone Company — and their action might re-act upon the Dominion Company, etc. — and the result would surely be that one or the other would buy you out.

It might be well to let the Dominion Company know incidentally that the shares of the Bell Telephone Company find eager purchasers at \$280 or 180 per cent premium. I think no time should be lost in doing this. Telegraph me the moment you have written to the Dominion Company — so that I may let it be known here.

Your loving son, Alec.

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P. S. for Mama. Dear Mama:

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I fear you must feel as if Alec's heart has gone out of your keeping and his hand — anywhere but where there is a pen! — but I am sure that you know me sufficiently to be sure that my silence is only due to dilatoriness and preoccupation and not to any lack of affection.

I had hoped to be home before this time — but I think that it would not be right to move just now.

When we leave here we shall not return till next year — but shall go from Canada to Washington.

As I have been to very considerable expense in fitting up a Laboratory here — I want to get as much use out of it as possible before it is closed for the year. We therefore propose to stay here during the present month and take our vacation in October instead. We hope to be in Brantford about the 1st of October and be in Washington about the 1st of November.

Love to Lizzie, Mary, Louisa and Carrie, Mrs. Ottaway, etc.

If you see Carrie tell her I have heard about Italy and that Col. Reynolds hopes to make the patents there of value. I will write as soon as I can.

With fond love, Alec.